

Sermon Outline.

CHRIST AND THE POOR—AND THE CHURCH
AND THE POOR.

SERMON NO. 2.

THEIR RELATION THEN AND NOW. MK.
XII, 37; I. COR. I, 26.

INTRODUCTION.

1. We showed last Sunday evening that Christ proved his character and mission by identifying himself with the neglected masses. This he did by relieving their physical wants, and by telling them the good news of a kingdom in which they might share.

2. This evening we want to ask and answer a few questions that will throw further light upon this subject.

a. What class of people formed the great body of the membership of the Christian church in the Apostolic and early ages of the church?

b. What class of the people now forms the great body of her membership?

c. And since the relations of these differ now from what they were then, it becomes an important question which has changed—Christ, the church, the "classes," or the "masses?"

I. What class of people formed the membership of the early church?

1. In the time of Christ.

In the twelfth chapter of Mark we learn that the "classes"—The Pharisees, the Sadducees, the Herodians, the priests, the scribes and the elders—opposed Christ; but that "the common people"—"the great multitude" (margin R. V.)—"The masses" "heard him gladly."

2. In the time of Paul.

In Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, written about the year 57 or 58, he calls their attention to the fact that not many of the "classes"—the wise, the mighty or the noble—could be counted in their number. It was still true that the body of the church was made up of members from the "common people."

3. In the second century.

Celsus ridicules the church because "wool-workers, cobblers, leather dressers, the most illiterate and clownish of men, were zealous preachers of the gospel." His opposition to the church is that it is composed of the "common

people," and not of the noble and learned—the philosophers of which he himself is one. It is the universal testimony both of sacred and profane history that the church was composed largely of the poorer classes of the people—of trades men, common laborers, and slaves.

II. What class of the people now forms the great body of the church?

1. Is it the "common people"—the laboring "masses"?

a. "How to reach the masses," for several years the burning question of religious conventions, is an acknowledgement of the fact that the "masses" are separated from the church. Mr. Moody says, "The gulf between the church and the 'masses' is growing deeper, wider, and darker every hour." This separation of the church and the "masses" is now a well established fact, one that is confessed by friend and foe.

b. Investigations made in country and city—in hundreds of towns and districts in several different states, says Dr. Strong shows that less than one half of our people profess to attend church. It can no more be said of us that we are a church going people. This indifference is not local. It is true of north, south, east and west. These investigations show that this neglect of the church is mostly among the poorer classes—among the poorer farmers and working men. Four churches in New York City—Episcopal, Dutch Reformed, Congregational, and Presbyterian—with an aggregate membership of twenty two hundred, have but one working man—a carpenter—but not a single serving man or women.

Dr. Gladden, says of his own congregation which worships in a very plain church, with seats free and easily accessible to the working classes not more than one tenth of the families represented are of this class; and that, too, after a special effort to interest the working-classes.

Dr. Delano pastor of the First Baptist church Evanston, Ill., says that he put to a representative prayer meeting of his church the question "How many laboring men are here" and received not a single response; and he says that the same is true of the other large churches of Chicago.

2. But how about the other "extreme of society?"

a. Mr. Loomis in his book on Modern Cities, says "that the Protestant churches, as a rule, have no following among the working men....go into an ordinary church on Sunday morning, and you see lawyers, physicians, merchants, and business men with their families—you see teachers, salesmen, and clerks and a certain portion of educated mechanics: but the working-man and his household are not there."

b. Dr. Gladden says that a large portion of the capitalists are more or less identified with the churches; and that inquiry in certain eastern cities shows that about three-fifths of the leading citizens are church members, while four-fifths are regular attendants at church. This proportion may not hold good all over the U. S., but it shows that the well-to-do classes are more or less identified with the churches.

III. Since the relations of the church to the "classes" and the "masses" are now very different to what they were in the first Christian centuries, it becomes an important question which has changed—Christ, the church, the "classes," or the "masses?"

1. That Christ has not changed his attitude towards any class goes without saying.

2. There have been great changes in the conditions of the "masses," and in their relation to the "classes;" and there have been some changes in the attitude of the "classes" toward the "masses." Changes wrought in both by the leavening influence of Christianity. But there is no change in their essential nature. Human nature is the same, and so far as it is not sanctified by the touch of Christ it leaves the relations of these classes the same. There are selfish poor and there are selfish rich; and these were and are antagonistic. So that after all there is not much change in the relations of these two classes.

3. It follows then that the change has taken place in the church.

a. Then the church and Christ were almost identical—He the head, she the body—to be a member of Christ was to be a member of the church and vice